

avarium by **handydandynotebook**

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Summary:

“Can’t answer if you don’t ask.”

“You were out for awhile, so, I’m just. Like, why did you never look up Billy?”

And for a moment, she’s taken aback. Blinking with the bewilderment that Tory would even care to ask such a thing. She jerks her head and lifts her chin.

“Well, how do you know I didn’t?”

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Author's Note:

this is crack planet and it's prolly not gonna make sense unless ur familiar with the rest of this cracky af 'verse, so like. idk, confuse urself if u want.

Cath's only been in her bunk for all of five minutes when Tory shuffles in.

"Hey, baby."

"Hey..."

"What's up?" Cath looks her over, frowns at the unreadable expression on her face. "Somebody giving you trouble?"

"Nah, it's nothing like that. I was wondering something though, um, about you." Tory meets her eye, wiping her palms on her khakis.

"Can't answer if you don't ask."

"You were out for awhile, so, I'm just. Like, why did you never look up Billy?"

And for a moment, she's taken aback. Blinking with the bewilderment that Tory would even care to ask such a thing. She jerks her head and lifts her chin.

"Well, how do you know I didn't?"

Tory pauses, eyes narrowing as she flounders. "I— I mean, I don't know that, I guess. I just figured, um. Just...I mean, you would've told me if you did, right, Sweets?"

She crosses her arms over her chest. Cath wonders if this is coming from Susan. Susan's told her she was never close with her stepson, that they didn't talk much, but hell if she trusts anything that Susan says since she stole her shit. Maybe she gave Billy a call, mentioned

something to Tory about it.

Nonetheless, she answers honestly.

“He wouldn’t have wanted to see me, baby. No more than that comatose boy would ever wanna see you.”

Tory flinches as if she’s been slapped, arms tightening, nostrils flaring. Cath doesn’t want to hurt her, but they’re both straight shooters. What’s the point in beating around the bush?

“Sweet little serpent of mine, you know what it’s like to do something you can’t come back from.” Cath exhales heavily and runs her hand back through her hair. Swears she finds more strands of silver every day. “I left my son alone with a monster and I never looked back. I left him when he needed me. Now he’s grown, in a good place, and doesn’t need me at all, and I’m just supposed to show up knocking on his door? Say, ‘hey, sorry I abandoned you fifteen years ago, how ‘bout we catch up? Drinks on me?’”

Cath knows what she did, that it makes her a monster too, almost, in a different way. It is her greatest shame and it taints her soul like poison. It is her biggest regret and yet it also isn’t, because she needed to be free of Neil with every fiber of her being. Needed more than anything to be free of the fists and fear and fury that held her back and distorted her into this fragmented, frightened thing she hardly recognized in the mirror.

Neil was going to kill her. If not bodily, which was a very real possibility on the days where the punching became throttling and the shoving got precariously close to the stairs, then at the least, he would’ve killed her spirit. She needed her freedom and that freedom had a hefty price, plain and simple. Cath never could’ve been free of Neil with his offspring on her hip, painful as it was to tear that bond asunder, it was pure and inexorable necessity— that’s the fuck of it all.

Tory’s arms loosen. Her eyes are still hard but they drop to her sides.

“Wouldn’t have done Billy any good, me showing up now. Or last year, rather. And look, I’m right back here anyway.” Cath growls and

kicks her prison-issued work boot against the painted concrete wall. "So I would've showed up just to leave him again, huh? Show up just to twist the knife I plunged into his back?"

"There's something I should tell you," Tory says, her voice scraping out of her in a small and strange way that makes it almost unrecognizable.

Cath frowns, decidedly discomforted. "Alright then. Don't leave me hanging."

"Okay..." Tory stares at her for a very long moment and the dawdling is so damn uncanny.

"Jesus, are you waiting for me to die of old age?" Cath snaps her fingers, agitated in her growing anxiety. "Spit it out."

"Look...um...god, I just missed you so much while you were gone. I mean, it was so bad you have no idea. I fucking hated you!"

That's it? Cath relaxes, shoulders slumping. She certainly doesn't hold it against her. She understands it actually, understands it well. Hate. She's intimate with her own hatred and the things it brings her. Her hate is so much more than every sharp edge, the blood diamonds in her bones.

"I bet you did. You hated me and I only left you for a year, so you get why I couldn't go see Billy?"

Tory swallows, nodding her head. "Can, I, uh...Sweets, can I lay in your lap?"

"Sure, baby."

Tory climbs into the bunk and rests her head on her thigh, head turned toward her stomach. Cath lightly strokes over her hair. She thinks it's true what they say about kids not maturing when they get locked up. Tory's officially hit twenty but she's needy as a toddler when it comes to affection. Then again, from what Cath knows, Tory had to be an adult on the outside before her time anyway. Maybe this is the most she's ever been coddled. Takes it now because it was off the table before.

“Hey, what you said about Miguel. If he woke up, like. When I get out, if...if he was awake, you think he really wouldn't want to see me?”

“Oh, no.” Cath shakes her head. “That'd be a terrible idea. If that's the case, you leave him be.”

“Even if I wanted to say sorry?”

“Tory, that boy would take one look at your face and see the worst day of his life play out in real time. You don't want to do that to him.”

“...it can't happen anyway.”

“What?”

Tory doesn't reply. She pushes her face into Cath's stomach and fists her hand into her khaki top so hard it's painful where the fabric goes taut. She doesn't say another word but where her face is, Cath feels warm wetness dampen the fabric.

Author's Note:

i think easter egg prison is the biggest bummer i've posted other than like, the nex snippet where susan most likely got max killed.